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Efforts to Promote Breastfeeding in the Supplemental Food Programs

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The supplemental food programs for women, infants, and children are federally sponsored programs that provide specific nutritious foods to supplement the diets of pregnant, breastfeeding, and postpartum women and infants and children. Participants are also taught the relationship between proper nutrition and good health. These programs are administered at the national level by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). They include the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP).

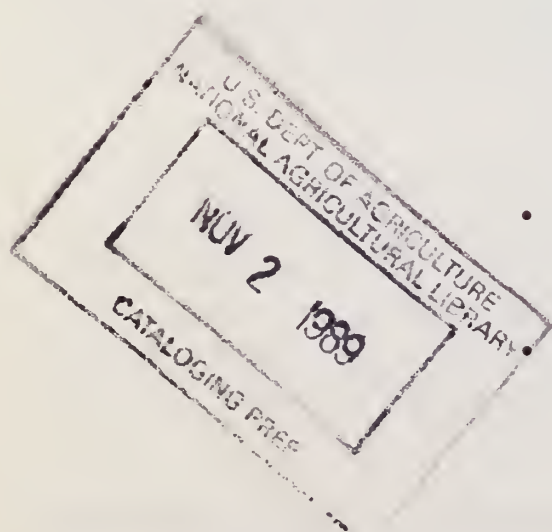
Eligibility criteria for WIC require that participants have both a low income and be determined by health officials to have nutritional problems such as anemia or abnormal growth patterns. Low income is also a requirement for CSFP, and some State and local CSF programs use nutritional risk as a criterion as well. WIC serves children up to 5 years of age. CSFP serves children up to 6 years of age, as well as elderly persons 60 years of age and older.

Breastfeeding Promotion

Nutritional and medical research has shown that there is no better food than breast milk for a baby's first year of life. Since one of the goals of the supplemental food programs is to improve the nutritional status of infants, WIC and CSFP encourage mothers to breastfeed their babies.

Federal requirements for WIC and CSFP include various provisions to encourage participating women to breastfeed. For instance:

- Both WIC and CSFP offer a greater variety and quantity of food to breastfeeding participants than to nonbreastfeeding, postpartum participants.
- In both WIC and CSFP, breastfeeding women are always considered to be at a higher level of nutritional risk than nonbreastfeeding, postpartum women. A nutritional risk priority system is used to determine position on the waiting list when a local agency has reached maximum caseload, and those persons in the highest priorities are served first.
- Both WIC and CSFP must include information on the benefits of breastfeeding in their nutrition education sessions.
- In WIC, breastfeeding women may receive benefits for up to 1 year while nonbreastfeeding women are eligible for only 6 months postpartum. In CSFP, both breastfeeding and nonbreastfeeding women are eligible for benefits up to 1 year postpartum.
- In WIC, funding initiatives can be made available to those States serving large proportions of high-risk persons, which include breastfeeding women and their breastfed infants.



- In WIC, a breastfeeding woman with no nutritional risk of her own may receive benefits based on the eligibility of her at-risk breastfed infant.

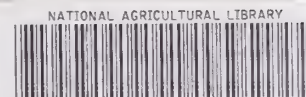
In addition to these provisions, USDA has developed several publications to help local agency staff teach WIC and CSFP participants about breastfeeding.

- How WIC Helps: Eating for You and Your Baby (PA-1198) provides guidance on the quantities and types of nutritious foods required in the daily diets of pregnant and breastfeeding women. This publication is also available in Spanish (PA-1198S). WIC and CSFP administrators can obtain single and multiple copies from the Supplemental Food Programs Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302.
- Promoting Breastfeeding: A Guide for Health Professionals Working in the WIC and CSF Programs (FNS 247) contains a variety of ideas and successful approaches to help health providers be more effective in their efforts to promote breastfeeding among low-income women. The guide is divided into four major sections: background information; implementing the promotion effort; sample lesson plans; and references and resources for health professionals. Single copies are available for WIC and CSFP administrators from the Nutrition and Technical Services Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302.
- Promoting Breastfeeding in WIC: A Compendium of Practical Approaches (FNS 256) discusses the findings of the WIC Breastfeeding Promotion Study and Demonstration carried out during fiscal years 1986-89. It contains a variety of ideas for breastfeeding promotion, a cross-site analysis of issues relating to the promotion of breastfeeding in WIC, and case study reports on eight exemplary sites—six WIC and two non-WIC sites. Single copies are available for WIC and CSFP administrators from the Nutrition and Technical Services Division, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22302.
- The Nutrition Education Resource Guide: An Annotated Bibliography of Education Materials for the WIC and CSF Programs includes references to educational materials on breastfeeding developed by a variety of sources. Single copies are available free of charge to WIC and CSFP administrators from the Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC), National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD 20705, while the limited supply lasts, and on loan thereafter.

Other Breastfeeding Education Resources

An extensive stock of breastfeeding education materials is available for loan from the Department's Food and Nutrition information Center (FNIC). FNIC serves as a national depository for both printed and audiovisual nutrition educational materials, and many of these are applicable for use with WIC and CSFP participants. The center collects materials developed by both public and private agencies and organizations and makes them available (in limited quantities) for loan to WIC and CSFP personnel. To borrow materials, send written requests to FNIC.

At FNIC, lending and reference assistance is available to congressional staffs, Federal and State government agencies, libraries, information centers, universities, colleges, Cooperative Extension research institutions (Federal, State, and county levels), and professional societies. FNIC offers access to its computer search services to help provide answers to nutrition and breastfeeding questions.



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Cooperative Efforts

USDA participates in several joint efforts to improve the health of mothers and children. Some of those initiatives have included:

- Participation in the national Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies campaign for public education to improve maternal and infant health. The campaign is sponsored by a coalition of more than 80 voluntary, professional, and government agencies, including USDA. Materials produced and distributed by the coalition include a resource package on breastfeeding for health professionals to encourage them to promote breastfeeding with their clients.
- Cosponsorship with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) in April 1982 of a satellite video-teleconference that addressed maternal and infant nutrition. A major segment of this conference was devoted to breastfeeding. The purpose of the teleconference was to increase nutrition and health professionals' knowledge and understanding of new research findings in nutrition as they relate to maternal and infant health. The audience, through the program's interactive segments, was able to communicate directly with well-known experts in this field.
- Participation with DHHS in a Joint Nutrition Education Advisory Committee for Maternal and Child Nutrition Publications. The committee focused its efforts on breastfeeding promotion and education in fiscal year 1983 and initiated the idea for the breastfeeding resource package developed and distributed by the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition.
- In fiscal years 1989-90 the focus of a joint USDA and DHHS, Office of Maternal and Child Health (OMCH), effort is in the area of continuing education in lactation management. WIC personnel are invited to participate in 10 regional conferences supported by OMCH through a training grant to the University of California-San Diego; USDA is providing funding for several additional conferences through an interagency agreement with the OMCH.

Breastfeeding Education Grants

In 1979, USDA awarded three grants to fund projects on breastfeeding:

- Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, was awarded a grant to develop and evaluate breastfeeding education curricula, training manuals, and teaching methods and materials for use in WIC and CSFP. The grant also funded research in the area of lactation failure.
- The Papago Nutrition Improvement Program in Sells, Arizona, was awarded a grant to develop a breastfeeding education network with six other health agencies on a reservation. The local Indian health agency developed a tested training protocol for field workers and staff, a team approach model for coordinating services among numerous agencies, and a model to show ways of increasing breastfeeding on other Indian reservations.
- The Windham Community Action Program in Windham, Connecticut, was granted funds to identify and understand psychological and cultural barriers to breastfeeding. The project also used grant money to develop and test the effectiveness of different strategies for overcoming resistance to breastfeeding.

Results from these projects have been useful in identifying barriers to breastfeeding and in developing or improving breastfeeding education programs in local agencies. Copies of the grantees' final reports and materials may be borrowed for review from FNIC.

In 1986, FNS contracted for a WIC Breastfeeding Promotion Study and Demonstration to identify, evaluate, and demonstrate approaches to effectively promote breastfeeding in WIC. In the early phases of the 3-year study, information on breastfeeding promotion was collected from exemplary WIC sites. Those findings were compiled into a compendium of practical approaches and distributed to all WIC State agencies for use by nutrition educators. In the final phase, which began in October 1988, seven WIC sites were awarded grants to develop and test breastfeeding promotion approaches using the following elements:

- A prenatal component that addresses participants' concerns and lack of knowledge about breastfeeding and incorporates positive peer influence.
- A postpartum component that provides early support and followup.
- A special group to coordinate breastfeeding promotion and support activities for participants in the prenatal and postpartum periods, including in-hospital.

The results of the WIC site demonstrations will be reported in 1990.

These are equal opportunity programs open to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, age, sex, or handicap. If you believe you have been discriminated against for these reasons, write immediately to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250.